

ESRO TO ORBIT FIRST SATELLITE NEXT MONTH

The first launching of a satellite built by the European Space Research Organization (ESRO), originally scheduled for mid-March, has been postponed until next month. The occasion will mark an important step in the European space research effort. The small vehicle will contain instruments to investigate solar astronomy and cosmic rays. It will be launched from the Western Test Range in California by a US Scout space booster.

ESRO, with headquarters in Paris, was founded three years ago by ten nations of Western Europe to conduct a cooperative program of basic space research. It has had financial and organizational difficulties, and its space launchings thus far have been restricted to sounding rockets. Over the next few years, ESRO plans a modest schedule for scientific satellites, to be launched both by US space boosters and by a new European-built

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launch vehicle now being developed.

Looking to the future, ESRO envisions such complex and ambitious projects as astronomical satellites and lunar probes. Moreover, ESRO has undertaken a study of European communications satellite technology. It has the technology and facilities to play a leading role if the Europeans decide to develop their

own regional communications satellite system. There are no indications that the countries of Western Europe propose to challenge INTELSAT in global communications, but a program to develop a small regional system--still a concept at this stage--could help put ESRO on the firm financial footing which it needs for its program of scientific space research. [REDACTED]

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